First record of the Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* from the Philippines

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As is the case for most of the avifauna of the Philippines, very little work has been done on shorebirds (waders). Except for the Migratory Animal Pathological Survey (McClure 1974), conducted from 1963-1970, records from earlier expeditions during the last century and the early part of this century, recent island records of shorebirds summarized by Dickinson *et al.* (1991), and work conducted at Olango Island, no further studies have been done on this bird group in the archipelago.

From 1987, research teams from the Philippine Wetland & Wildlife Conservation Foundation, Inc. (PWCF, formerly Asian Wetland Bureau — Philippines) have identified most of the remaining wetlands in the Philippines and have initiated surveys of the wildlife, particularly birds, that inhabit those areas. Magsalay *et al.* (1989) have summarized details of these sites and have listed results of the surveys.

In August 1987, a PWCF team visited the expansive tidal flats at the southern part of Olango Island (10°14'N 124°01'E), about 4.5 km off the south-east coast of Mactan Island near Cebu. During that survey, the team discovered that the area hosted large numbers of migratory shorebirds. Since then, as a result of regular monitoring and banding activities (which take place from March to May for northward migration and from August to November for southward migration), 52 species of waterbirds have been identified (Magsalay *et al.* 1993). Among these were the globally threatened Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*, Chinese Egret *Egretta eulophotes*, and two new records for the Philippines, the Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris* reported by Redman (1993), and the Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*. Because of the importance of the area to migratory birds, the island was declared the Olango Wildlife Sanctuary by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, under Presidential Decree 903 of 14 May 1992.

The Eurasian Oystercatcher is the most widespread and migratory of the world's 11 species of oystercatchers (Hayman *et al.* 1986), with records from Taiwan (Severinghaus and Blackshaw 1976) and Japan (Austin and Kuroda 1972), but was previously unrecorded in the Philippines.

On 21 November 1992 during regular bird banding activities, one Eurasian Oystercatcher was caught in a mist net, after dark, within the Olango Wildlife Sanctuary. It was banded, photographed and measured prior to release that same night. Interestingly, the bird had not been sighted earlier in the day, nor was it sighted the next morning after it was released. The species has not been recorded in the Philippines since.

The captured bird (Figure 1) was distinguished from other species of oystercatchers, and identified as the subspecies *H. ostralegus osculans*, by the long white wing-patch that extended from the secondaries to the inner five primaries (but not to the outer primaries as in *H. o. ostralegus* and *H. o. longipes*), and well into the median coverts. The white area on its rump extended up to the mid portion of its back. The soft part colours were as follows: bill bright red-orange at the base, grading into dusky grey at the tip; eye-ring red-orange; iris dull brown; legs greyish pink. The following measurements were taken: wing 250 mm; wing span 850 mm; tail 89 mm; tarsus 51 mm; nalospi 69 mm; bill 89 mm; head and

Figure 1. Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* captured on Olango Island, Philippines on 21 November 1992. Photo: M. Saito and S. Sasamori.

Table 1. Birds captured and banded at Olango Island, Philippines from 20–22 November 1992.

Species	Number caught
Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*	1
Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*	7
Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*	8
Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*	3
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*	18
Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*	5
Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*	1
Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*	2
Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*	1
Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*	14
Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*	4
Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*	1
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*	17
Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*	2
Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*	7
Total	91

bill 133.9 mm; total length 460 mm; weight 520 g. Moult score: $5^{1}4^{1}2^{1}0^{1}$. The bird was banded with Malaysian metal band V-08368.

Fourteen other species of waterbirds were caught and banded from 20–22 November 1992, when the oystercatcher was netted (Table 1).

Special thanks are due to the PWCF bird banding team, composed of H. Gonzales, E. Pendon, and G. Toledo, for their dedicated field efforts; to the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers M. Saito and S. Sasamori, who photographed the oystercatcher and assisted the PWCF field team; to the Asian Wetland Bureau for providing the bands and sharing technical skills; to the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology, Wild Bird Society of Japan, and Nikon Co. for banding and monitoring equipment; and to the Foundation for Philippine Environment and World Wildlife Fund-International for grants supporting PWCF activities on Olango. H. C. Miranda, Jr. kindly reviewed an earlier draft of this paper. Magsalay also would like to acknowledge the help of former Vice Mayor C. Eyas of Lapulapu City, for generously providing a staff house in Olango Island; of the Japan International Cooperation Agency for providing communication equipment for the Island; of Mayor E. Weigle and his staff and councilmen from Lapulapu City. Finally we wish to thank the local supporters and friends and all those in the Olango community who in one way or another have helped the research and conservation efforts on the island.

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Rusty-bellied Shortwing *Brachypteryx hyperythra* at Lava, Darjeeling, India in April and June 1996

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Between 24-29 April 1996 the authors, together with Bram Demeulemeester, were birding the remnant primary forest, tall secondary growth and cleared, scrubby areas around the village of Lava, Darjeeling, northern West Bengal, India. While searching along the road towards the Neora valley at about 2,000 m elevation in the morning of 27 April our attention was suddenly drawn towards a previously unnoticed clear, loud and musical song emanating from a damp well-vegetated gully nearby. In response to tape playback of the sound recorded song our mystery bird soon popped out and IM, being first to get a good look at it, readily identified it as a male Rusty-bellied Shortwing *Brachypteryx hyperythra*, a virtually unknown and much sought-after eastern Himalayas species. Fortunately it was one of those star-performing individuals, which stayed around long enough until the three of us obtained highly satisfying views while it was singing its head off at point-blank range. Meanwhile a second male had started vocalizing nearby. In early June EV revisited Lava, resulting in no less than nine different territorial males being found in the same general area. Our observations constitute the first definite records of Rusty-bellied Shortwing for the Darjeeling area since 1920 and remain one of the very few field observations throughout the species's restricted range.

The following description was compiled on the strength of field notes and sound recordings taken on 27 April 1996. Copies of these recordings were deposited at the British Library National Sound Archive, Wildlife Section, London.

SIZE AND STRUCTURE A typical *Brachypteryx*, featuring a rounded head, short straight bill, short rounded wings, short square tail and noticeably long tarsi. Similar in size and general build to Lesser Shortwing *B. leucophrys* and noticeably smaller, more slender and shorter tailed than White-browed Shortwing *B. montana* (neither species seen in direct comparison). Primary projection short, encompassing about 15% of